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Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/143, the present report gives an overview of measures taken by States, as well as by intergovernmental bodies, to address violence against women. The report concludes with recommendations for future action.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an annual report on the implementation of the resolution and requested that the report include, at its sixty-second session, information provided by the United Nations bodies, funds and programmes and the specialized agencies on their follow-up activities to implement the resolution (see A/62/201); and at the sixty-third session of the Assembly, information provided by States on their follow-up activities to implement the resolution. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

2. In its resolution 62/133, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an oral report at its sixty-third session with information provided by the United Nations bodies, funds and programmes and the specialized agencies on recent follow-up activities to implement resolutions 61/143 and 62/133.

3. In paragraph 8 of resolution 61/143, the General Assembly urged States to take action to eliminate all forms of violence against women by means of a more systematic, comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained approach, adequately supported and facilitated by strong institutional mechanisms and financing, through national action plans, including those supported by international cooperation and, where appropriate, national development plans, including poverty eradication strategies and programme-based and sector-wide approaches, and outlined detailed actions towards that end. In paragraph 10, the Assembly urged States to integrate gender perspectives into the comprehensive national development plans and poverty eradication strategies that address the social, structural and macroeconomic issues, and to ensure that such strategies address violence against women and girls. It also urged States to ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on violence against women, including with the involvement of national statistical offices and, where appropriate, in partnership with other actors (para. 11). The Assembly also invited the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and other relevant United Nations bodies to address violence against women (paras. 17 and 18).

4. Based on inputs received from Member States in response to a note verbale, the present report summarizes measures taken by States to (a) strengthen gender equality frameworks (addressing in particular para. 8 (a), (b), (c), (e), (l), (p) and (q) and para. 10 of the resolution); (b) develop and enhance policy frameworks and provide resources to address violence against women (in particular para. 8 (g), (p) and (q) and para. 10); (c) end impunity for perpetrators and protect women (in particular para. 8 (i) and (o)); (d) prevent violence against women (in particular para. 8 (f), (h), (i) and (k)); (e) provide services for victims/survivors (in particular para. 8 (j)); (f) build the capacity of relevant stakeholders (in particular para. 8 (d), (n) and (m)); and (g) enhance data collection (in particular para. 11). It also discusses efforts of intergovernmental bodies to address violence against women (in particular paras. 17 and 18).

II. Measures taken by States to implement the resolution

5. As of 6 June 2008, 44 States[1] had responded to the Secretary-General's request for information on the implementation of resolution 61/143.

A. Enhancing gender equality frameworks

6. Violence against women is rooted in power imbalances and structural inequality between men and women. It is a form of discrimination against women and a human rights violation. Comprehensive measures to secure gender equality and protect women's human rights, in accordance with the international human rights framework, are necessary for the effective prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women.

7. States have enhanced legal and policy frameworks for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by incorporating relevant provisions in their national constitutions (Algeria, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Hungary, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru and Turkey); enacting gender equality laws (Australia, Japan, Estonia, Finland, Peru and Viet Nam); and reviewing and revising discriminatory laws (Brazil, Haiti and Ukraine). Oman has initiated a review of laws, policies and practices with the aim of abolishing or revising those that are discriminatory against women. The Gender Equality Duty introduced in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 2007 places an obligation on public sector organizations to promote gender equality.

8. Several States reported about their national action plans on gender equality (the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Ukraine). There is also a trend towards integrating measures to achieve gender equality into national development plans (Colombia, Ecuador, Estonia, Hungary and Turkey). Some States, including the Czech Republic, Estonia and Luxembourg, have mainstreamed gender perspectives into action plans on employment, health, social affairs, social inclusion and/or sustainable development. Some of these plans also specifically address violence against women.

9. Discriminatory sociocultural attitudes that perpetuate women's subordinate status in society pose a challenge to achieving gender equality. The education system can be used as a vehicle to change such attitudes and promote a culture of human rights and gender equality. Several States that submitted information for the present report highlighted efforts to address discriminatory attitudes through gender equality education (the Czech Republic and Peru); training teachers on gender equality (Greece, Haiti and Oman); eliminating gender stereotypes from textbooks (the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Oman and Turkey); and mainstreaming gender perspectives in teaching materials and strategies (Peru).

[1] Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Jamaica, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Viet Nam.

10. Economic inequality between men and women and discrimination against women in the economic sector contribute to the perpetuation of women's subordinate status in society, which places them at an increased risk of violence. As a consequence, States are implementing measures to support women's economic empowerment to, inter alia, increase access to credit and skills training (Finland, Greece, Peru and Turkey); reduce the wage gap between men and women (Finland and Ukraine); and encourage female entrepreneurship and promote flexible working hours (the Netherlands).

11. A few States reported on increases in resources allocated for gender equality programmes. For example, the budget of Canada's national machinery for the advancement of women grew by 40 per cent in 2007. Other States, such as Norway and Peru, have used gender-responsive budgeting to promote gender equality, while Algeria has started to integrate gender perspectives in budget analysis.

B. Policy frameworks and resources to address violence against women

12. Violence against women has wide-ranging consequences for women, their families and communities and high costs for society as a whole. The prevention and elimination of such violence can be accelerated through implementation of dedicated plans and policies, such as national action plans that address violence against women in a comprehensive manner; integration of measures to address violence against women into various programme areas; and enhanced allocation of resources for such work.

13. States increasingly have in place national action plans on violence against women which may include measures aimed at supporting victims/survivors; awareness-raising, education and sensitization components; training and capacity-building efforts; and initiatives aimed at prosecution, punishment and rehabilitation of perpetrators. Some action plans address all forms of violence against women, as is the case in Ecuador (adopted in 2007), Haiti (adopted in 2005), Peru (second plan, 2008-2015) and Slovakia (2005-2008). Algeria adopted a national strategy on violence against women in 2007. France's second national action plan (2008-2010), entitled "Twelve goals to combat violence against women", has four main areas of focus: enhanced understanding of the phenomenon through research and data collection; prevention of violence through addressing stereotypes in media, awareness-raising and measures aimed at perpetrators; better coordination of work on violence against women through capacity-building and partnerships; and protection of women and their children through legislation and support mechanisms.

14. Plans that address particular forms of violence, such as domestic violence or sexual violence, are also in place. National action plans on domestic violence have been adopted by Albania (2007), Denmark (2005-2008), Germany (second plan, 2007), the Netherlands (ending in 2008), Norway (third plan, 2008-2011), Portugal (third plan, 2007) and Turkey (2007-2010). Belgium's national action plan on domestic violence ended in 2007 and will be succeeded by a national action plan covering all forms of violence against women, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes. A cross-Government action plan on sexual violence and abuse was launched in the United Kingdom in 2007.

15. The importance and usefulness of action plans is confirmed by the fact that some States, including France, Germany, Norway, Peru and Portugal, have in place a second or third plan. Impact assessments of earlier efforts guide the development of new plans or result in intensified future action, as in Denmark, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom. Other States, including Australia, Hungary, Slovakia and Thailand, are in the process of developing national plans or strategies on violence against women, while the Czech Republic and Estonia aim to develop national action plans on domestic violence.

16. National action plans on violence against women sometimes encompass strategies to respond to the consequences of violence and victims' specific needs. Australia's draft national action plan recognizes that domestic violence contributes to homelessness and contemplates dedicating $A 150 million to the construction of 600 homes to accommodate the homeless, including women and children escaping domestic violence. Portugal's third national action plan on domestic violence includes measures to facilitate the integration of victims/survivors into the labour force.

17. The integration of measures to eliminate violence against women into national plans and programmes results in greater attention to the issue across sectors and by a broader range of stakeholders. There has been some effort to mainstream measures to eliminate violence against women into national development plans (Ecuador, Mexico and Turkey); national action plans on gender equality (the Czech Republic, Finland and Luxembourg); or into particular sectoral plans or programmes, such as on social inclusion (Greece), or on reduction of violence and internal security (Finland). Prevention of violence against women is a goal in Finland's 2007 Government Programme, as well as in a number of action programmes. Some measures to address domestic violence have been integrated into Saudi Arabia's national programme for family security.

18. Information received for the present report suggests that States are devoting more resources to prevent and address violence against women. Centres providing services to victims/survivors of violence against women (Austria, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), specialist services (the United Kingdom), shelters (Denmark, the Netherlands), perpetrator programmes (Belgium, Denmark) and community projects by women's groups addressing violence against women (Canada) are receiving increased funding. There have also been increases in budget allocations for the implementation of policies (Brazil) and laws (Mexico) on violence against women. In addition to the budget allocated for implementation of its national action plan to combat domestic violence, 2005-2008, Denmark provided significant additional funds to support and treat victims of domestic violence.

19. States have also expanded their contributions aimed at the elimination of violence against women through international cooperation. The Netherlands has allocated €21 million for a period of three years to support national efforts in eight countries for the development and implementation of national action plans on violence against women, and contributed €4 million to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. Australia's overseas aid agency is evaluating interventions to address violence against women in five countries in the region in order to strengthen and scale up support.

C. Measures to end impunity and protect women against violence

20. Failure to hold perpetrators of violence against women accountable results in impunity. Comprehensive and non-discriminatory legislation covering all forms of violence against women, and its effective implementation and monitoring, are a prerequisite for eliminating impunity. Access to justice for victims, including through awareness of rights and availability of effective remedies, legal assistance in dealing with the justice system, well-trained and gender-sensitive police, and court protocols and procedures that avoid revictimization, are also critical. Special measures are needed to protect women in situations of increased risk, such as in conflict and post-conflict situations, from violence and prevent impunity.

1. Enactment, strengthening and amendment of laws

21. States are increasingly enacting new, or enhancing existing, laws on violence against women, such as the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence adopted by Mexico in 2008. New legislation has been adopted in a number of countries to address specific forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence (Brazil and Greece in 2006; Albania, Switzerland, Thailand and Viet Nam in 2007), forced marriages (Belgium and the United Kingdom in 2007), sexual harassment (Greece in 2006), stalking (Germany and Liechtenstein in 2007), marital rape (Greece in 2006, Thailand and Viet Nam in 2007) and illegal sterilization (Slovakia in 2005). Brazil's "Maria da Penha" law, of 2006, uses a wide-ranging definition of domestic violence that covers physical, sexual, psychological, economic/property and moral violence; acknowledges the right of women to be free from violence irrespective of their sexual orientation; provides for preventative arrests; and significantly increases penalties for perpetrators. San Marino is drafting a law on violence against women.

22. The submissions received for the present report suggest a growing trend towards enacting and/or amending laws to criminalize acts of violence against women and bring penalties for perpetrators in line with the severity of the crime, with a view to ending impunity. A revision of the law in Colombia made domestic violence a crime, as opposed to an offence, and increased the penalties. A new criminal offence of "recurring abuse" has been added to the domestic violence law in Chile. Breaking a "non-molestation" order in the United Kingdom has become a criminal offence subject to up to five years' imprisonment. Twenty-nine states in Mexico criminalize domestic violence. Laws in Chile and Thailand have been amended to broaden the definition of rape and increase the penalties for sexual violence. Turkey also revised its law in 2004 to ensure that perpetrators of honour and customs killings receive the highest punishment while Haiti reclassified sexual crimes as crimes against the individual rather than the community.

23. States have also amended laws to broaden the definition of domestic violence (Japan and Turkey in 2007). States have added provisions that create restraining orders (Hungary in 2006, the Netherlands); provide for the expulsion of perpetrators of domestic violence from the common dwelling (the Czech Republic and Switzerland in 2007); and prohibit sexual intimidation (the Netherlands in 2006). Laws on forced marriage and female genital mutilation have been strengthened in France.

24. Austria is broadening the definition of domestic violence in its 1997 Act on protection against violence by removing the requirement of a "family-like" relationship between a perpetrator and victim of domestic violence, and is drafting a bill to create a separate offence for repeat offenders. Chile has submitted bills to parliament to address femicide and increase penalties for crimes against intimate partners. Finland is considering making petty assault in a close relationship a public prosecution offence. Two bills aim to broaden the scope of Jamaica's legislation on sexual violence. The penalization of domestic violence is a priority in Algeria's strategy to combat violence against women.

25. Legislation has been enacted to enhance protection of particular groups of women from violence. Some States provide for higher penalties for violence against disabled women (Algeria and Brazil in 2006), pregnant women (Algeria and Greece in 2006) and domestic workers (Brazil in 2006, Peru in 2007). In 2007, France extended the right of residence to certain foreign/immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence.

26. Inadequate reporting of cases of violence against women continues to be a challenge in addressing violence against women. According to one estimate, only about 12 per cent of domestic violence cases are reported (the Netherlands). Some States, such as Switzerland, have attempted to address this challenge by enhancing legislation that ensures support to victims/survivors. Liechtenstein's 2008 Victims Assistance Act provides such support through counselling services and financial assistance, and also establishes a Victim Counselling Office. According to the Act, victims are entitled to compensation from the State for both material and non-material injuries.

27. Several States have revised their procedural laws and rules in order to better support victims and ensure that their cases are heard expeditiously. In some instances, victims must be notified of all procedural steps (Brazil), while in others, rules are in place that establish timelines for courts and other institutions to take action in cases of violence against women (Australia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

2. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws

28. The availability of specialized police, prosecutors and courts for cases of violence against women contributes to the effective implementation and enforcement of laws and enhances victims' access to justice. The United Kingdom has specialist police officers to investigate rape cases, as well as rape prosecutors, and has established 98 domestic violence courts. One hundred criminal courts on domestic violence are functioning across Brazil and the number of police precincts with expertise in dealing with victims of violence has increased significantly since 2006. All police districts in Norway are required to have a full-time domestic violence coordinator and specialized teams are in place in the largest districts. A special prosecutor for crimes of violence against women and trafficking in persons has been established within the office of the Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico.

29. Guidelines and protocols have been instituted by States to establish appropriate and predictable standards in the implementation of laws. Protocols have been created for police and security forces handling cases of violence against women, for example in Argentina and Turkey. Sentencing guidelines for judges

contribute to greater consistency in domestic violence cases, as in the United Kingdom. Belgium is developing such guidelines. A "rule book" for implementation and monitoring of measures for the protection of victims of domestic violence was developed in 2007 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

30. States have taken steps to increase cooperation among stakeholders and to enhance implementation of laws. Federal-Länder working groups on domestic violence in Germany have resulted in extensive interdisciplinary cooperation between the federal and Länder Governments and non-governmental organizations. The United Kingdom Crown Prosecution Service's violence against women strategy and action plans aim to improve coordination in the prosecution of such crimes. In addition, a domestic violence enforcement campaign launched in December 2007 seeks to establish partnerships between police, charities and communities to increase reporting and bring more perpetrators to justice. In an effort to increase reporting on, and cooperation among professionals involved in violence against women cases, the Netherlands has established a website and a privacy help desk that provides clarification on rules relating to the exchange of data.

31. Some States, including Australia, Germany and Luxembourg, have stepped up measures to monitor implementation of laws and evaluate their legal and judicial systems' response to cases of violence against women. The Maria da Penha Observatory in Brazil monitors implementation of the domestic violence law by police, prosecutors, judges, relevant officials in the executive branch and service providers. Peru has established a working group composed of public and private sector stakeholders to evaluate existing legislation on family and sexual violence and propose improvements.

3. Increasing awareness of laws and remedies

32. Women's knowledge of their rights and how to claim them contributes to ending impunity for violence against women. States have taken various measures, such as establishing resource centres, conducting awareness campaigns, producing films and brochures and creating websites, to increase women's awareness of their rights and of legal remedies. Canada's National Clearinghouse on Family Violence is a resource centre for information on violence within relationships with over 130 publications, a video library and a referral service for victims of violence. States have produced guides, in the form of pamphlets and DVDs, to familiarize women with legal proceedings (Japan and the United Kingdom). The United Kingdom's court guidance, "Domestic Violence: A Guide to Civil Remedies and Criminal Sanctions", has recently been updated. Films in 10 languages and leaflets in 9 languages, providing information on rights and opportunities for assistance in cases of violence against women, have been produced and disseminated in Denmark and Japan, respectively. Particular efforts are being made to ensure that information is accessible, and websites containing comprehensive information on domestic violence exist in the Netherlands and are being developed in Belgium and Portugal. A guide for assistance to victims/survivors of violence through the legal process is being developed in Haiti.

4. Legal support and assistance

33. Several States have instituted measures to strengthen access to justice and redress through the legal process for victims of violence against women, including

by ensuring that victims are accompanied in court proceedings (Austria and Brazil). States, such as the Netherlands and Peru, are providing free legal assistance to victims/survivors of violence against women. Australia has in place special measures to ensure that such assistance is available to indigenous women who are victims/survivors of violence or at risk of such violence. According to Portugal's third national action plan on domestic violence, only the victim's income, as opposed to the family's income, will be used to determine eligibility for legal aid, thereby increasing the number of women eligible for such assistance.

5. Protection of women in situations of greater risk

34. Women are at greater risk of violence in some situations, including in conflict and post-conflict situations, and States are responding to these risks. Measures to provide medical care, shelter and indemnification to women victims of violence in armed conflict have been instituted in Algeria and all local officers have been instructed to support victims of sexual violence. Colombia's national policy on peace and reconciliation identifies violence against women as a priority, and its policy for reintegration into civilian life of members of paramilitary groups includes measures aimed at the prevention of violence against women. Colombia has also developed a handbook on gender-based violence for members of the National Reconciliation Commission, as well as guidelines prohibiting violence against women for military forces. Peru's law on internally displaced persons contemplates measures to address violence against women.

35. Some States have taken measures to avoid the revictimization of women refugees or asylum-seekers who are victims/survivors of violence through gender-sensitive refugee and asylum procedures. In April 2008, Canada updated its guidelines for processing claims for refugee protection to give special consideration to victims/survivors of violence against women and prioritize their applications.

D. Prevention measures

36. Prevention of violence against women requires changing attitudes, challenging stereotypes and making the environment less conducive to such violence. Measures to strengthen gender equality frameworks and eliminate discrimination against women, discussed in section II.A, contribute to the prevention of violence against women. States that provided information for the present report also highlighted measures of leadership and awareness-raising, as well as work to increase the involvement of men and boys and to change the behaviour of perpetrators. Women facing discrimination on multiple grounds are at greater risk of violence and targeted prevention policies are therefore necessary. The links between violence against women and their increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS require particular attention. The impact of different prevention measures, however, remains difficult to evaluate.

1. Exercising leadership

37. Ending violence against women requires clear political will and commitment at the highest levels of leadership of the State to highlight the unacceptability of such violence. As part of his campaign to end violence against women and girls, the Secretary-General of the United Nations is personally approaching world leaders to

spur action through national campaigns. Albania's Prime Minister declared the year 2008 as the "Year for the fight against domestic violence"; the Speaker of Parliament condemned domestic violence in televised public service announcements from November 2007 to January 2008, and parliament designated 30 November 2007 as the official parliamentary day against domestic violence. The President of Finland and the Cabinet have, respectively, expressed a commitment to strengthen gender equality and more effectively address violence against women. In 2008, mayors from the metropolitan region of Port-au-Prince committed to combating violence against women in the Haitian capital.

38. San Marino organized a high-level event at United Nations Headquarters in June 2008 in support of the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women. France is considering a series of interventions and projects to address violence against women during its Presidency of the European Union (second half of 2008).

2. Awareness-raising

39. Increased public awareness may contribute to the prevention of violence against women and many States have initiated or supported awareness-raising campaigns. Such campaigns expose and convey the unacceptability of violence against women and are instrumental in stimulating change. Many have utilized creative and innovative ways to reach diverse audiences, including through use of print media, the Internet, radio, television, film, theatre, art, sports and popular culture, including music and videos.

40. Member States of the Council of Europe have participated in the campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, which formally concluded in June 2008. Member States of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) are participating in a campaign to eliminate violence against women. Campaigns on violence against women were launched by Albania, Denmark, Belgium's Flemish community and the Netherlands in 2007 and Finland, Belgium's French community and Viet Nam in early 2008. France plans to launch a communications campaign in the second trimester of 2008. Many States, including Greece, Japan, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine, undertake specific activities on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and the campaign 16 Days of Activisim to End Gender Violence, from 25 November to 10 December.

41. States have also taken other measures to raise awareness of violence against women, including creation of popular radio soap operas addressing the issue (Peru); development of short films on the subject by recognized filmmakers (France); development of fact sheets for the media and the public (Switzerland); development of pamphlets, CDs and information kits (Peru, Thailand); a national essay competition on the theme of domestic violence (Albania); an art competition for youth on the theme of violence against women (San Marino); and workshops on prevention of violence against women for diverse audiences (Chile, Jamaica).

3. Working with men and boys

42. Awareness of the importance of the involvement of men and boys in efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women is growing, and many States are expanding their efforts in this area. Measures include: campaigns targeting men and

boys (Denmark and the Philippines); awareness-raising programmes for groups of men, such as members of the armed forces and military recruits (Colombia and Turkey); and opening a dialogue on women and men working together to identify and overcome obstacles to gender equality, including violence against women (the United Kingdom). In the Philippines, a men's group, Men Opposed to Violence against Women Everywhere (MOVE) has been established. A network of "men against violence" centres is active in seven regions of Ukraine. The United Kingdom has funded organizations that target men and boys in efforts to prevent violence against women.

4. Programmes for perpetrators

43. In addition to ending impunity for acts of violence against women by punishing perpetrators, States, including Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Philippines, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, increasingly have in place treatment programmes in order to change behaviour and prevent further acts of violence. Measures have been taken to improve, better coordinate and publicize such programmes, including through conducting research to identify good practice models for working with perpetrators (Australia); organizing annual national round tables of counselling centres for perpetrators of violence to promote coordination (Switzerland); and developing a resource guide to such programmes (Canada). There is also a trend towards expanding the availability of treatment programmes. In the United Kingdom, for example, all probation areas have domestic abuse perpetrator programmes, which were completed by 1,800 offenders in 2007. Norway's third national action plan on domestic violence contemplates the development of treatment programmes and their availability in all parts of the country, including in prisons.

5. Prevention of violence against women and multiple discrimination

44. Women's risk of becoming victims of violence is exacerbated by factors such as age, ethnicity, migrant or minority status, and disability or HIV status, and several States have in place targeted prevention programmes to address these factors. Canada is taking special measures to strengthen prevention of violence against aboriginal, immigrant and minority women, as well as senior and young women. Germany's second national action plan on violence against women focuses on prevention of violence against migrant women and women with disabilities. Several other States aim to prevent violence against migrant women, including through orientation and settlement education programmes (Australia) and dissemination of fact sheets explaining the rights of migrant women in domestic violence situations (Switzerland).

45. Australia aims to break the cycle of violence against indigenous women through prevention programmes that address substance abuse, build self-esteem, encourage youth to achieve goals, support family units and develop community role models. Such programmes also seek to develop an understanding among indigenous communities that customary law and practice cannot override legal and human rights, in particular the right of women to be free of violence and sexual abuse.

46. Brazil has taken initiatives to address the links between violence against women and women's and girls' high vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. One of the main goals of Brazil's National Pact to Curb Violence against Women is the protection of

women's sexual and reproductive rights and countering the feminization of HIV/AIDS. In this context, workshops have been organized to enhance awareness of the links between sexual violence and the spread of HIV, and victims/survivors of sexual violence receive HIV preventive drugs.

E. Services and support for victims of violence against women

47. Victims/survivors of violence against women require a range of services, including medical, psychological, legal and social services that respond to their short-term injuries, protect them from further violations and address longer-term needs. They also require access to information, counselling and referrals, and safe shelter if they have to flee from their homes.

1. Integrated services

48. The model of bringing together a range of services for victims/survivors of violence against women in a single location, often called a "one-stop centre", is being increasingly used by States. Integrated services are provided through intervention centres in Austria; 58 centres for women in Chile (first established in 2005); 15 intervention centres in the Czech Republic (first established in 2007); 10 regional crisis centres in Hungary (first established in 2004); a victims counselling office in Liechtenstein (established in 2008); one-stop "woman- and child-friendly investigation studios" in key cities of the Philippines; 109 one-stop crisis centres in hospitals throughout Thailand; and 40 family counselling and 72 community centres in Turkey. In Ukraine, 22 centres provide psychological assistance and 4 centres provide medical and social services for victims/survivors of domestic violence. In Japan, authorized facilities in prefectures serve as spousal violence counselling and support centres.

49. States are expanding the availability of and funding for services for victims. The number of women's centres in Chile has doubled since they were first established in 2005. The network of sexual assault referral centres in the United Kingdom will be extended from 19 to at least 36 by the end of 2008 and sexual violence advisers will be installed in 38 locations to provide support for victims of sexual violence. Some States fund non-governmental organizations to provide services. Australia funds 24 organizations to provide specialized family violence services through 41 offices across the country.

2. Hotlines and shelters

50. Many States, including Austria, Denmark, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Thailand, have established hotlines or helplines that provide information, counselling, and support and referral services for victims/survivors of violence against women. These hotlines/helplines are reporting increased call volume over time, which is an indication that more women are aware of their availability and seeking their services. For example, Mexico's hotline registered a 27 per cent increase in call volume following a 2007 campaign; Argentina's helpline registered a notable increase in call volume between 2005 and 2008; and Brazil's national call centre registered almost 125,000 calls in 2007, representing a 147 per cent increase compared with 2006. An anonymous reporting

line was established in Japan in 2007 to make the availability of protection for victims/survivors of violence against women better known.

51. States, including Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Thailand and Turkey, are establishing, expanding or funding shelters for women fleeing from abusive situations. Chile established 16 shelters in 2007; Haiti recently established its first publicly funded shelter; and Oman plans to establish shelters. Shelters in Luxembourg provide 5.1 beds per 10,000 inhabitants, which exceeds the Council of Europe's expert group recommendation of 1 bed per 7,500 inhabitants. States, such as Mexico and the Netherlands, have formalized the regulation and operation of shelters through legislation.

3. Guidelines for service provision

52. In order to ensure better and more consistent services to women victims of violence, States have developed guidelines or recommendations for the provision of such services, including for health professionals (Chile) and local authorities (Finland). Slovakia is in the process of drafting such guidelines for health professionals. The Philippines' Performance Standards and Assessment Tools for Services Addressing Violence against Women establishes standards for capacity-building of service providers, as well as for required facilities, protocols and referral services.

F. Capacity-building

53. Specialized training is increasingly viewed as essential for the effective implementation of laws as well as the provision of services. It builds the capacity of those who have professional responsibility to address cases of violence against women. In addition, specialized training for those who have the power to influence social norms and practices, including teachers, community leaders and media personnel, can be instrumental in the prevention of violence against women.

54. Many States, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Greece, Luxembourg, Mexico, Peru and the United Kingdom, provide education and training on violence against women to relevant players, such as health professionals, Governmental officials, including police and prosecutors, judges, social workers, teachers and/or service providers. Such training may be part of the basic training, as is the case of police training in Austria and Liechtenstein, or it may be in-service training, such as the training of police and health personnel in Turkey. Doctors in Saudi Arabia and judges in the United Arab Emirates who handle cases of violence against women also receive specialized training. Gender thematic seminars are being planned for judges in all parts of Brazil.

55. Of the reporting States, only Peru discussed impact evaluation, noting that a 2007 evaluation of the impact of training of the Lima national police showed improvements in police actions with respect to victims/survivors of violence against women, quality of statements prepared by police, and police partnerships with other stakeholders.

56. Other capacity-building measures for those that come into contact with victims include: workshops for journalists to ensure gender-sensitive reporting of cases of violence against women in the mass media (Peru); a nationwide educational

campaign for professionals addressing violence against women (Denmark, 2008); the establishment of a university diploma programme on prevention and treatment of family violence (Argentina); and development of a guide to enable doctors and nurses to detect cases of violence against women and provide appropriate care (Belgium).

G. Data collection

57. The development of sound and effective policies benefits from quality data and research on the scope, magnitude, causes, consequences and costs of the phenomenon, and States are increasingly ensuring that their policies and programmes are informed by a stronger knowledge base.

1. Data collection through surveys

58. Several States reported about their efforts to collect information on violence against women through surveys. Norway's 2005 nationwide survey on domestic violence showed that one in four women over 15 years had been subjected to, or threatened with, intimate partner violence and 9.3 per cent of women who ever had a partner had been subjected to severe intimate partner violence. A further survey is planned in Norway in 2009. Nationwide representative surveys on domestic violence conducted in Finland in 1997 and 2006 did not show a significant change in the extent of such violence, while those in Denmark in 2004 and 2007 showed a one third decrease in the number of women victims of domestic violence. Random sample surveys on domestic violence conducted in Japan at regular intervals show that many women continued to be subjected to such violence. Portugal completed its second national inquiry on gender-based violence and planned to release the findings in June 2008. The Netherlands will conduct a national survey on domestic violence in 2008. Mexico is drafting a "National Assessment on the Status of Gender Violence" to determine the magnitude, forms and settings of violence against women to inform Government policies. It is also developing a national database on violence against women.

59. States have used other types of surveys, such as crime victim, safety and opinion surveys, to shed light on the scope of violence against women. France conducted a survey on victims of violence in 2007 which showed that the proportion of female victims of violence was significantly higher than male victims and that perpetrators of violence were overwhelmingly male. Data collected through safety surveys in Australia in 1996 and 2005 indicated an increase in women reporting physical and sexual assaults. A survey conducted in the Czech Republic in 2007 showed that 36 per cent of the persons polled believed that domestic violence occurred often and 37 per cent believed that it occurred sporadically.

60. Several responses noted that difficulties in collecting data on violence against women and the lack of systematic nationwide data collection on the issue remained challenges in addressing violence against women (Albania, Australia, Finland, Hungary and Viet Nam).

2. Service-based data

61. States are increasingly compiling service-based data on violence against women, including through health centres and hospitals (Belgium, Peru and Saudi

Arabia); police stations and courts (Albania, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Hungary, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom); housing and social welfare services (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); and hotlines, shelters and other support services (Greece and Peru). A publication by Statistics Canada entitled *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends* pulls together previously released data from victimization surveys, police services, courts and service agencies to assess trends in violence against women. Switzerland is revising its police crime statistics to include data specific to domestic violence. States, including Argentina, Belgium, the Philippines and Portugal, are responding to challenges in collecting and aggregating service-based data by establishing uniform systems of reporting and registering cases of violence against women.

3. Research to inform policy

62. States are increasingly making available resources for research on violence against women, including on domestic violence (Albania, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Haiti, Turkey, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom); homicides within couples (Switzerland); sexual assault (Australia and the United Kingdom); violence against domestic workers (Peru); and stalking, female genital mutilation and forced marriage (the United Kingdom). In Germany, a broad-based study on violence against women informed the development of the second plan of action in 2007. Qatar carried out a field study on violence against women. Saudi Arabia convened a national expert group on family violence in May 2008 which identified needs for intervention and made concrete recommendations for action across sectors.

III. Measures taken by United Nations bodies to implement the resolution

63. The General Assembly, in paragraphs 17 and 18 of resolution 61/143, invited relevant United Nations bodies to discuss, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women and to set priorities for addressing this issue in their future efforts and work programmes, and requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, a set of possible indicators on violence against women.

A. Setting priorities for future work

64. Several United Nations bodies have taken measures to comply with the resolution. The Economic and Social Council held a round-table discussion in July 2008 on the role of the Council in addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations, in the form of a dialogue with the Chairpersons of the Commission for Social Development, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Population and Development. The Chairpersons provided examples of steps taken and opportunities for contributing to the common challenge of addressing violence against women in the future. Council members made comments and recommendations on the role of the Council in addressing this challenge within its own mandate, including in its oversight function in regard to the functional commissions.

65. The Commission on the Status of Women regularly addresses violence against women as a form of discrimination against women within its mandate. At its fifty-first session in 2007, the Commission considered the priority theme of "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" and adopted agreed conclusions[2] with recommendations for action by different stakeholders. The Commission also held an interactive panel discussion on follow-up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) at national and international levels, under its agenda item on emerging issues. It has addressed violence against women in relation to HIV/AIDS; female genital mutilation and forced marriage and the girl child. The Commission regularly holds joint discussions with the Statistical Commission, including on the question of violence against women. The Secretary-General launched his campaign to end violence against women and girls at the opening meeting of the fifty-second session of the Commission, on 25 February 2008, with the participation of the President of the Economic and Social Council and in the presence of many ministers, high-level representatives of the United Nations system and an unprecedented number of representatives of non-governmental organizations from around the world.

66. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice addresses the criminal justice aspects of violence against women. At its seventeenth session in April 2008, the Commission held a thematic discussion on the aspects of violence against women that pertain directly to its work, with the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. It adopted decision 17/1 entitled "Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women and girls",[3] requesting the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women and other stakeholders, to convene an intergovernmental group of experts to review and update, where appropriate, the 1997 Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and to make recommendations on addressing violence against women and girls. The Commission will consider the results of the meeting at its nineteenth session.

67. The Commission on Population and Development, at its fortieth session in 2007, was briefed by the Division for the Advancement of Women on the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. The Commission subsequently invited Member States to include information on strategies adopted to address violence against women in their national reports.

68. The Commission for Social Development, at its forty-sixth session in February 2008, considered the issue of violence against women within its priority theme, "Promoting full employment and decent work for all". The Commission was briefed by the International Labour Organization on "Full employment and decent work: intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women". The presentation covered the most effective policy interventions to eliminate all forms of violence against women in the workplace.

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[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 7* (E/2007/27-E/CN.6/2007/9), chap. I, sect. A.

[3] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 10* (E/2008/10-E/CN.15/2008/22), chap. I, sect. D.

69. The Gender Advisory Board to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development submitted recommendations to the Commission at its eleventh session in 2008 suggesting that it monitor, document and raise awareness of the use of science and technology and Internet communication technologies to perpetrate violence against women, and document and disseminate how science and technology can be used to avoid, address and mitigate violence against women.

70. Violence against indigenous women has been a consistent concern of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Permanent Forum issued recommendations in 2003, 2004 and 2006 on violence against women, including the sexual exploitation of indigenous girls, domestic violence and sexual abuse, and sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

71. The Human Rights Council, at its eighth session in June 2008, held a discussion on violence against women in its consideration of the human rights of women, where the need for legislation, awareness-raising, attention to victims and involvement of men were highlighted.

B. Work on development of indicators

72. In response to paragraph 18 of resolution 61/143, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women held a joint dialogue on indicators on violence against women, on 28 February 2008. The meeting discussed the proposal for a set of global indicators to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, put forward by the expert group meeting convened by the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Economic Commission for Europe and the Statistics Division of the United Nations, in collaboration with the other four regional commissions, in October 2007. The Statistical Commission subsequently approved the formation of a "friends of the chair" group to conduct an in-depth technical review of proposed indicators to measure violence against women and requested the group to report back to the Commission at its fortieth session.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

73. **A comprehensive approach is necessary in order to make progress in preventing and effectively responding to all forms of violence against women. In their efforts to address the structural causes of violence against women, States have taken measures to promote gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women. States should continue these efforts and place high priority on enhancing legal and policy frameworks for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including by integrating relevant measures into national development plans and programmes and poverty eradication strategies. States should also put in place efforts in the education system and public awareness-raising measures, to modify and eliminate sociocultural attitudes and stereotypes that are harmful to and discriminate against women and perpetuate the subordination of women.**

74. **A growing number of States have in place new, or strengthened existing legislation on violence against women, especially on domestic violence. They are criminalizing acts of violence against women and ensure that penalties for**

perpetrators are commensurate with the severity of the crimes. Procedures, rules and protocols have been revised and specialized mechanisms put in place to improve implementation.

75. **In order to end impunity, States should ensure that legislation is in place that comprehensively addresses all forms of violence against women, is in line with international commitments, and imposes penalties for perpetrators that are commensurate with the severity of the crimes. States should intensify efforts to evaluate and assess the impact of legislation, rules and procedures, including the reasons for low reporting, and respond promptly to the findings. They should have in place victim support legislation that is sensitive to the needs of victims of all forms of violence against women, and consider incorporating into law measures aimed at prevention of violence. Particular efforts should be made to fully sensitize all relevant officials to all forms of violence against women and existing laws, policies and regulations, and monitor their compliance with this framework.**

76. **A number of States have in place national action plans on violence against women or on specific forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence, to ensure comprehensive, interdisciplinary and coordinated action. States should continue to adopt, or revise and update, national action plans and ensure that they incorporate measurable goals and timetables as well as monitoring measures. States should ensure that their development and implementation, as well as their regular updating or revision, utilizes insights gained from impact evaluations and all available data and research. They should also ensure that national action plans effectively integrate the contributions of all relevant stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary service sectors that work with, or come in contact with, victims of violence against women and can contribute to prevention and effective response.**

77. **Measures have been taken to enhance women's awareness of laws and remedies. Integrated services — medical, psychological, social and legal — are increasingly available for victims/survivors of violence against women. Attention has been paid to the protection of women in situations of increased risk. States should continue and reinforce these efforts in order to enhance victims' access to justice and empowerment. They should take concrete steps to strengthen women's awareness of their rights and legal remedies. They should expand the availability of specialized services for victims that are adequate and accessible and foster women's safety and agency. States should strengthen the capacity of service providers, including by ensuring that resources are available to support victims.**

78. **States have undertaken measures to enhance prevention of violence against women. They should continue to do so, and in particular provide leadership at the highest levels, recognize and support the role of women's organizations, including at the grass-roots level, and accelerate efforts to involve men and boys in highlighting the unacceptability of all forms of violence against women as a violation of women's human rights.**

79. **Data and information on all forms of violence against women, from different sources, remain inadequate. Lack of such data, and of qualitative research, on the scope of violence and its impact on the victims, their families**

and societies constitutes a challenge to effective prevention and response. States should therefore intensify their data-collection efforts and fully integrate data on violence against women in their national data-collection systems. They should significantly increase efforts aimed at evaluating the impact of all initiatives on violence against women, including legislation, policies and their implementation, provision of services and prevention, to better understand the effectiveness of specific measures, enable corrective action and contribute to the development of good practice.

80. **Several United Nations bodies have addressed the issue of violence against women within their respective mandates in response to the resolution. The General Assembly may wish to encourage all relevant bodies to continue and expand these efforts.**